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**Rezension von "Von Schongauer zu Rembrandt: Meisterwerke der
Druckgraphik aus der Sammlung der Fürsten zu Waldburg-Wolfegg",
Ausstellungskatalog, hrsg. von Bernd M. Mayer; Ravensburg, Städtische
Galerie Altes Theater, Ravensburg, 1996**

Matile, Michael

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Review: Masterpieces at Wolfegg

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Catalogue and Book Reviews

Masterpieces at Wolfegg

Michael Matile

Von Schongauer zu Rembrandt: Meisterwerke der Druckgraphik aus der Sammlung der Fürsten zu Waldburg-Wolfegg, exhibition catalogue curated by Bernd M. Mayer, Ravensburg, Städtische Galerie Altes Theater, Ostfildern bei Stuttgart, Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1996, 199 pp., 108 b. & w. ills., DM 34.

Somewhat hidden in the mass of exhibitions that took place in 1996, a little but remarkable show was held at the Ravensburg Städtische Galerie Altes Theater, and it now lives on in the form of the handsome catalogue edited by Bernd M. Mayer, curator of the princely collections. These include one of the oldest collections of prints and drawings in the world, which goes back to its founder, Maximilian Willibald (1604–67), *Truchsess* of the Holy Roman Empire, Count of Wolfegg and baron at Waldburg, and seems to be known only to students of the work of the so-called Hausbuchmeister, whose *Wolfegg-Hausbuch* has been in the collection of the Waldburg-Wolfegg family since the mid-seventeenth century. The circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the *Hausbuch*, obviously not the only remarkable event in the history of the collection, are unfortunately glossed over except from a hint in the text to cat. no. 7, but otherwise the reader is provided with a clear introduction to the formation of this collection. The most remarkable fact about it, however, is the quality and the freshness of the prints, which since their purchase have rarely been exhibited or even exposed to light.

The 90 prints discussed in the catalogue reflect the variety of a '*Requiel des plus belles estampes des meilleurs Maîtres anciens*', and include German (with Bohemian and Swiss), Netherlandish, Italian and French prints, from Schongauer to Wallerant Vaillant and Anthonie Waterloo. Schongauer, Dürer and Rembrandt are represented by six prints, while Altdorfer and Hercules Seghers by two – the latter's a fine landscape (cat. no. 45, Rowlands 17) and the ruins of the Rijnsburg abbey (cat. no. 46, Rowlands 39). Each print is illustrated and discussed in an entry – most by Mayer, but some by Michael Schauder and Peter Schmidt – which discusses the iconographic and technical issues and supplies relevant bibliographical information. Unfortunately, nothing is said about the state of the preservation of the prints, which cannot always be judged from the illustrations, as these appear at times to have been retouched or trimmed.

The greater part of the collection is pasted down and bound in single volumes, ordered by iconography: 20 are devoted to Mariological themes, 20 to Christological, and others to angels, landscapes, allegories, saints, scenes of the

Old and New Testament, architecture, animals and plants. Max Willibald was particularly interested in contemporary portraits and in frontispieces of a wide range of books. In this respect he gave his agents quite clear orders: '*Es wird insonderheit desideriert, in allen vornehmen Orten und Städten, wo Buchdruckereien, als Basel, Strassburg, Frankfurt, Köln, Brüssel, Antdorf [Antwerp], Amsterdam Nachfrag zu halten, was für Frontispicia sive tituli librorum zu bekommen*' (pp. 12–13). Their endeavours contributed to seven volumes, each comprising about 2,500 '*Titelkupfer*'. The 300 pages of the inventory of an earlier collection, that of Basilius Amerbach, follow similar iconographic criteria, while the *Catalogue de livres d'estampes et de figures en taille douce* (1666) of the contemporary Abbé de Marolles lists, first, prints after *Maîtres dont les Oeuvres sont estimées*, then the volumes of artists *de moindre reputation* and finally *les Ouvrages de ceux qu'on appelle les vieux Maîtres & les petits Maîtres, qui sont aussi grandement estimez* (for which see M. De Marolles, *Catalogue de livres d'estampes et de figures en taille douce*, Paris 1666, p. 19). In addition to these two collections one must mention those of Remigius Faesch at Basle and the outstanding Netherlandish example of Michiel Hinloopen (for which see O. Fischer, 'Geschichte der öffentlichen Kunstsammlung', *Festschrift zur Eröffnung des Kunstmuseums Basel*, Basle 1936, n.p. and *De prentschat van Michiel Hinloopen: Een reconstructie van de eerste openbare papierkunstverzameling in Nederland*, exh. cat. curated by Jan van der Waals, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, The Hague 1988). The most astonishing feature of Max Willibald's collection is its breadth, with an encyclopaedic ambition to cover all fields of scientific and artistic production. Along with his second wife Clara Isabella, born Countess of Arenberg and a practising artist, he was also a keen patron of printmakers, notably the Kilian family in Augsburg, and Wolfgang in particular, who engraved his portrait (fig. 126).

The only constraints that operated on Max Willibald were money and time, for he had a demanding military career culminating in the defense of Lindau. His approach to collecting reveals a devout man, less interested in historical or art-historical matters. Whereas the Abbé de Marolles was obviously familiar with the work of Giorgio Vasari or Carel van Mander, Max Willibald ordered his hoard as a traditional '*Kunst und Wunderkammer*', as did many royal or princely collectors of his day.

This catalogue is best seen as an eye-opener, an attempt to attract a wider public to this treasure trove of prints; the title of the exhibition thus features well-known names and does not perhaps suggest the range of the collection. One is



126. Wolfgang Kilian, *Portrait of Maximilian Willibald zu Waldburg-Wolfegg*, engraving, 182 × 132 mm (Wolfegg, Collection of the Princes of Waldburg-Wolfegg).

not sure whether the selection is representative of either the richness of the holdings or of the collector's individual taste and interests. Much valuable information about this is spread throughout the two introductory essays by Mayer

and Peter Eitel, and we must warmly welcome their effort to open for us this new chapter in the study of print-collecting history.